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## THE MENTAL CAPACITY OF SAVAGES

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The conception of the mind of "primitive man" held by Herbert Spencer<sup>1</sup> had the advantage of aesthetic symmetry and proportion. If animals can be arranged in seried ranks, and if the highest of these is infinitely below the civilized man, there ought surely to be, not only a missing link, but also grades or ranks of men varying in their capacities and possibilities. If this assumption be made, and if the isolated sentences quoted from travelers and residents among savages be duly cited, it is possible to make out a good case, as the classical statement of Spencer shows. The criticism of this point of view by J. R. Angell,<sup>2</sup> F. Boas,<sup>3</sup> John Dewey,<sup>4</sup> W. I. Thomas,<sup>5</sup> and others has grown in volume in recent years. It is possible now to declare one thing confidently, namely, that should it finally be demonstrated that the savage is inferior to civilized man it will have to be proved on other grounds than those formerly held sufficient. The old arguments are discredited and the old facts questioned. The inquiry may be now prosecuted with methods of scientific precision impossible to an earlier generation, and the next chapter of the investigation should be written with the help of our recently acquired technique of modern experimental psychology.

It is the purpose of this article to offer some observations on the subject based on a residence of several years among the tribes of the Upper Congo River, with particular reference to the people living around the mouth of the Bosiri River, almost exactly on the equator. These tribes were so recently subjugated that it was

<sup>1</sup> H. Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*.

<sup>2</sup> J. R. Angell, *Chapters in Modern Psychology*.

<sup>3</sup> F. Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*.

<sup>4</sup> John Dewey, *Psychological Review*, Vol. IX.

<sup>5</sup> W. I. Thomas, *Sex and Society*.

possible to find many villages not yet visited by a white man. The people are Bantus, clothed in raffia, with native iron-working arts, no written language whatever, and still practicing, at rare intervals, ceremonial cannibalism. The tribes are isolated and small, no one with any gifts of political leadership or military genius having appeared to found large units. They are the sort of people to whom the older and familiar generalizations were meant to apply. They were supposed to have keen sense-organs beyond the power of civilized man to approach. The eye was assumed to have the power of field glasses. There was supposed to be a native sense of direction better than a compass for finding the way home. Emotionally the native was believed to be very unstable, impulsive, incapable of anything like persevering labor, improvident, intolerant of restraint, and unmoral. Intellectually he was said to be a superficial observer, quick, especially in childhood, maturing early and soon coming to the limit of development, and with little or no power to think in abstract terms, lacking in discrimination, and without ability to concentrate on a problem. The literature of the "imitation school" of social psychology abounds in references to the "primitive traits" which are supposed to come to the surface in religious revivals, mob activities, and whenever the restraints of ordered life are removed.

Before going into the statement of the actual facts as they were found, there are half a dozen sources of error which are sufficiently noteworthy to be set down here as explaining in part how such a mistaken view could have been formed, assuming that it is a mistaken view. Let us consider these:

- I. The most obvious force operating to tip the scales of sober judgment is race prejudice, the assumption that other people are inferior to us in so far as they are different. We are coming to realize that the Hindu, Chinese, and Japanese are not convinced of their inferiority, but rather are certain of our inferiority to them, but it comes as a surprise when first we learn that the Eskimo has the same conviction. The same is true eminently of the Congo native. In a good-natured debate one day I was giving arguments for the superiority of the white man over the black, and instanced the fact that in a territory containing twenty million natives the

absolute authority was exercised by the Belgians, who numbered less than a thousand. The reply was immediate.

"Give us breech-loading guns and ammunition, and within a month there will not be one of the thousand left alive here."

"But," says the white man, "that is the point. The white men invented and made their guns and ammunition."

"Sir, do you know how to make a gun and ammunition?"

"Well, no, not yet, but I could learn to make them in a factory."

"Certainly you could, if they would teach you, but so could we."

Many of those who observed and recorded their experiences and whose record became the source of the older views were men whose perceptions were colored by the conviction of a measureless superiority—and judicial fairness in such circumstances is not always easy.

2. Unwarranted generalization is the commonest danger in scientific research, against which the carefully trained scientist is likely to be sufficiently on his guard. But most of the observers whose words are quoted in the books were not careful scientists, and their unwarranted but explicable leaps of inference are set down as unprejudiced and dependable fact. For example, a native finds his way back home unaided when the white man in the party is hopelessly lost, whereupon it is set down in imperishable record, to be copied with an uncritical credulity, that primitive people have a mysterious instinct of direction and carry compasses in their heads. Or one of them is very stupid in handling a new tool and makes a laughable blunder in trying to use a saw, and forthwith it is demonstrated that his whole race has no power of logical thought!

It is fair to say that some of the most careful of writers have at times been guilty of using isolated anecdotes from travelers, and have thus fallen into this type of error. It is like the foreign traveler who saw a street fight from the window of a Pullman car, and, having inquired the name of the state, wrote in his notes, "The inhabitants of Illinois are a very warlike race." Primitive man has been treated that way many times.

3. Another source of error might, by a slight stretch of terms, be called the psychologist's fallacy. It is the assumption that we are viewing the matter exactly as the person under observation

does, which assumption is uniformly untrue. Consider, for example, the reports on native religions, even by those who have lived for years among the people. Most of such reports are, or at least were, inaccurate to a surprising extent. We have assumed that any human being could observe the facts of social life. No one would accept the observations of an uneducated sailor to determine the facts of botany or geology, but ability to report on social facts is equally dependent on training.

The Western observer thinks of religion in terms of doctrines and theologies and is able to report the beliefs and doctrines of the native in a way that is very complete and systematic and misleading. In fact, a safe rule would be to trust implicitly the account of an actual happening reported by a reputable traveler or explorer or missionary, but to be very slow to accept his explanation of the event.

For example, the natives are supposed to have a belief in spirits which extends to everything they see in their world. The trees have a spirit, there is a spirit of the river, a spirit in the stones, and in every object in their world.

Now the very great difficulty that I found in getting a satisfactory word that would answer to the concept of "spirit" leads me to question this statement. And I can imagine a psychologically inclined Eskimo coming among us and reporting in a paper before the Polaris Scientific Institute that white people believe every chair to be inhabited by a spirit, proving his point by declaring that he has seen many a white man curse a chair after it had maliciously got in his way and caused him to stumble over it.<sup>1</sup> White people believe that spirits inhabit golf balls and billiard balls, and are frequently seen to offer short prayers to them in order to induce them to roll where they are wanted. They also imprecate them if they do not obey. They even believe that so small an object as a collar button has an evil spirit, and often swear violently when this little object rolls under the furniture—thinking that the action is caused by the mischievous spirit of the button. The interpreter of the savage mind must beware of the psychologist's fallacy.

<sup>1</sup> Missionaries in inland China report that the natives consider that the missionaries worship chairs, on the ground that they often bow down to them at family worship.

4. A fourth source of error may be called the mythopeic error, the tendency of a native to invent an explanation rather than confess ignorance. Most of their customs are due to the unthinking adherence to the ways of the former generations, and they are not conscious of why they do them. If they are asked a reason they will often invent one, but this is not necessarily the true reason. Few of us could give offhand the explanation of why we remove our hats in saluting a lady acquaintance. In fact, it does seem almost unreasonable "to make the meeting of a female friend the occasion for taking off part of your clothes to wave in the air." Any explanation that the man in the street might give of the custom would be a guess, and this is doubly true of the uncultured peoples in their attempt to explain—and yet the traveler can tease out an explanation if he tries.

Mr. Stefansson<sup>1</sup> writes that he has found out why the Eskimo do not punish their children. This may be true and it may not, but it is true that he has found out the reason they give, and that is perhaps a different matter.

5. Two more sources of error remain to be noticed, the first of which is due to ignorance of language. It is very easy to fall into the error of supposing that because a word has not been found, none exists. The character of the languages of different peoples is so different that it is next to impossible to make any valid argument on the absence of a word.

6. Finally a sixth sort of error may be said to be the error due to knowledge of language. An illustration may be found in the argument of a recent writer made from the manner of designating relationships by blood. There is in many primitive languages a lack of any word to distinguish brother from cousin, and this failure to distinguish brother from cousin, and son from grandson, means that the primitive man has such a vague idea of personality that he has not been able to make the fine distinctions. We, on the other hand, distinguish brother from cousin, and stepson from blood kin, etc., therefore we have a much more highly developed sense of personality.

In order to appreciate the native point of view it is necessary to call in our primitive psychologist once more. I recall a time in

<sup>1</sup> V. Stefansson, *My Life among the Eskimo*.

the Congo when I had occasion to refer to the tail of a chicken, and used the word that was in my notes as meaning "tail." I had pointed out the caudal appendage of a dog, and had been told that it was called *bongongo*. This word proved quite intelligible when I applied it to designate the tail of a sheep or a buffalo, but when I said something about the *bongongo* of a chicken, the whole company burst out into loud laughter. A chicken is not a dog, of course not, and did I not see that a chicken had just feathers sticking out behind and it was not a *bongongo* at all? They called that *mpete*, of course. Was it really true that white people called the feathers of a chicken by the same name that they called the real tail of a dog? Later on I found that the word for tail of a fish is a very different word from either of the other two.

Now the Eskimo psychologist might, on the basis of these facts, write that English-speaking people have such vague, undefined notions of tailhood and of spinality that they cannot distinguish the difference between the feathers of a chicken and the tail of the dog and call both these by the same name as the steering gear of a fish. It is true that Western people distinguish the snout of the pig from the lip of a man, and these two from the beak of a bird, and all three from the muzzle of a horse, and are therefore in a state of evolution which will probably lead them to a stage where they can develop a notion of distinction in tails in the process of time. I submit that the analogy is fair.

The sources of error being so many, what methods are to be relied upon for dependable results? The answer is that careful, painstaking, scientific experiment and inquiry will alone give dependable findings. Most of those we now have are not to be depended upon. But I wish to direct attention to the subject of language.

The language of the people is a very instructive phenomenon—giving much information as to the manner of the working of the logical processes of those in whose mouths it developed. It does not follow, perhaps, that a highly developed language indicates a highly developed capacity, for language is inherited and passed on, the slave speaking the tongue of the master; but the presence of a complete and scientifically constructed language would make impossible the opposite argument.

Now the people of the equatorial Congo speak a language of a pronounced agglutinative type, quite typical of the Bantu tongues, being complete and developed to a degree surprising to those whose conception has been derived from writings of the Spencerian variety. A brief account of some of the outstanding features of the language will make the matter clear.

The alliterative concord, which makes this family of languages unique among human tongues, consists in a device which indicates the agreement of the dependent words upon the governing noun by means of a prefix attached to verb, adjective, numeral, and possessive pronoun, relative, and demonstrative. There is no sex gender in the language, but some eight "classes," or grammatical genders, with an inflection for the plural. Each of the sixteen different noun prefixes must be applied to the dependent words in the sentence. For example, should I wish to ask the question: "Where are those two spoons of mine which you gave me?" every word except the verb in the dependent clause would have to begin with the plural prefix of *totoko* ("spoons"), thus:

*"Totoko tonko tokam tofe toki wonkaka tolenko?"*

"Spoons those mine two which you-gave-me where-are-they?"

Should the question be regarding the whereabouts of an equal number of bananas, similarly acquired, the words would be:

*"Banko banko bakam bafe baki wonkaka balenko?"*

"Bananas those mine two which you-gave-me where-are-they?"

Suppose there is only one banana involved in the inquiry, then I should have to ask:

*"Jinko jinko jikam jiki wonkaka jidenko?"*

"Banana that mine which you-gave-me where-is-it?"

I should ask for two goats given by you and lost by me in the following language:

*"Nta inko ikam ife iki wonkaka ilenko?"*

"Goats," etc.

Should I inquire about canoes, every dependent word must begin with *bi-*, the prefix for *biato*; if for sticks, it would be *be-*, the prefix of *betamba*, etc.



There is a diminutive prefix which can be further diminished so that by the form of the noun the degree of littleness can be indicated. Likewise there is an augmentative inflection which can be still further augmented. Thus the five words, *imbwambwa*, *imbwa*, *mbwa*, *embwa*, *embwambwa*, mean respectively: "little tiny dog," "little dog," "dog," "big dog," and "enormous big dog." It is a sort of comparison of nouns.

The verb is very highly developed and very complex. It contains the subject of the verb in the form of a pronominal prefix, as in Latin. It also has a pronominal syllable to indicate the pronominal object, as in Hebrew. But in this family of languages there is the indirect object, which is similarly indicated. *Akenda*, "he-is-going"; *tokenda*, "we-are-going"; *wonkunda*, "you-are-striking-me"; *akokunda*, "he-is-striking-you"; *lonjeleza*, "you-bring-him-to-me," *baolonjeleza*, "they-have-brought-him-to-me."

By suffixes the shades of meaning of the verb can be changed after the analogy of the Hebrew verb-form. Thus *tunga* means "to tie or bind," *tungama*, "to be bound," *tungya*, "to cause to bind," *tungela*, "to bind for" someone; *tungola*, "to unbind"; *tungana*, "to bind each other"; *yatunga*, "to bind one's self"; and so on to the number of eight. But there are numbers of permutations and combinations of these, as, for example, the causative and the dative can be combined in the form *tungeza*, "to-cause- (or help-) to-tie-for" someone; *tungoza*, "to-help-unbind-for" someone; *tungameza*, "to-help-to-place-in-a-bound-state-or-condition for-the-sake-of" someone, and so on to the number of ten or twelve.

Now each of these separate forms is capable of tense and modal inflection to the number of at least fourteen tense forms, differing *in toto* from the models of Indo-European tense inflection. There is an indefinite present, an immediate future, a distant future, an immediate past, a remote past, a continuative past, a past with the consequences no longer obtaining, e.g., *nsombaki*, "I-bought-it (but sold it again)," a "not yet" tense, and various ways to introduce negative ideas.

Examples of the variety of pronoun, tense, and mode in a single word would be: *ifokokaya*, "he-will-surely-give-you"; *ayatunga*, "he-has-bound-himself"; *ayatungama*, "he-has-placed-himself-in-

a-bound-condition"; *aoyolokotungamezamaka*, "he-has-caused-himself-to-be-placed-in-a-bound-condition-for-your-sake."

The extraordinary development of the verb and noun is compensated for by a corresponding lack in adjective and prepositions. If we reckon all the agglutinated forms of a transitive root like *tung-*, "bind," including the possible pronominal combinations, there would be more than five thousand different words from this root alone.

There is perhaps only one real preposition, though there are nouns for "top," "bottom," etc., which can be used to translate "above," "below," etc. The preposition, therefore, is merely a connecting particle.

Adjectives are very slightly developed, the grammatical form for "strong" being that of a noun. The word for "hot" is the word for "fire," but there is a word for "cold." They do not know ice save in the rare occurrence of hailstones.

Onomatopoeic particles of an undifferentiated character, which may be thought of as intermediate between our adverbs, adjectives, and interjections, are very numerous. Thus we say to a child, "He shot him, bang." Most verbs of action admit of such a completing word in the Bantu tongues.

This word or particle is, in animated discourse, supplied by the listener, who fills out a pause with an appropriate inflection on the part of the narrator. In the case of an orator making a speech, the whole audience responds. The delivery of an oration is therefore a very lively performance, in which the native orators take great professional delight. In an address I heard once, the speaker, describing a hunt, went on to say:

"I was passing through the forest when suddenly I saw a large bird on a tree just above the water of a stream. I took aim with my flintlock"—"T-e-e-e," said everyone in the audience as the speaker went through the motion of aiming—"and then"—he snapped the fingers of his right hand—"Kow!" shouted the two hundred listeners—"and into the water"—he stopped and made a downward gesture with the hand—"Chubu!"—"("Splash!")"—sang out the whole company. This peculiarity of conversational response may be partly responsible for the successful technique of

the orators. At any rate they are very enthusiastic public speakers, take great delight in it, and when skilful handle their audience with great art.

Their number system runs as far as a million. I do not know what use they have for the word now, but I think it was needed when there was a commerce in beads, now no longer existing.

Many native proverbs have been recorded by various investigators, and these are often curiously parallel to those in other languages, though there are many not like ours. "No meat without bone" (No rose without a thorn), "Don't carry fish to the riverside" (Carrying coals to Newcastle), "One day won't spoil an elephant" (Rome wasn't built in a day).

These linguistic considerations are presented for the purpose of illustrating the statement that the language is at least sufficiently developed to make impossible any conclusive argument of a lack of mental power or ability on account of the lack of linguistic development. Particularly noteworthy is the preference for abstract nouns, as, "man of strength." It was formerly thought that they could not think abstract thoughts.

If we consider, as Spencer does, the sensory life, we find the usual statements to be that the keen eyes of the savage and his extraordinary powers of hearing mark him off from his degenerate civilized brother, even if they do place him nearer the lower animals in this respect. My own observations among them would not bear this out. In a hippopotamus hunt one day the natives insisted that there was a herd at the end of an island a mile away and paddled through a broiling sun, getting under cover of the island and approaching the spot carefully only to find that the supposed ears and nose of the "hippos" were the roots and snags of trees. Later on I secured a good pair of field glasses and was able to make them out wrong on many occasions.

The sense of direction that is so often referred to by travelers, who assert that they "have a compass in their heads," is attributable, in the opinion of several of us who have had experience with them, to a mere familiarity with the locality, much as we are able to make our way about in a room in utter darkness if it is sufficiently familiar. On more than one occasion I have witnessed very spirited

debates between different natives themselves, indicating that the compasses in their heads were at least not all working together. In Mr. Stefansson's last book there is an account of a difference of opinion between the white man and the native in a country strange to both. The later events vindicated the opinion of the white man.

The emotional life of the uncivilized peoples has been written about with a great deal of assurance by many anthropologists. The older view was that primitive men, being midway between man and brute, were characterized by a sort of activity more nearly like primitive reflex action. They were less highly evolved and therefore less able to have emotions connected with the more remote possibilities. They were supposed to be impetuous, like children, noisy, excitable. And yet we were able, on the Congo, to write contracts for a year at a time and keep large numbers of servants and workmen constantly employed with as little trouble among the laborers as we would expect to encounter here at home. They were said to be characterized by improvidence and a lack of the feeling of ownership, but the Congo natives eat *cassava* as the principal article of breadstuff, and this requires fully nine months in which to mature—quite as long as wheat and longer than any other of our ordinary foodstuffs.

The inhibition of impulses is supposed to be one of the best indexes of mentality. Feeble-minded children are unable to choose between two offered objects because they cannot apparently suppress the impulse to seize the nearest. The savage has been said to be under the same limitation. And yet it is altogether probable that he would be the first to accuse the white men whom he knows of just this fault. The white man comes into the tropics with exaggerated ideas of the importance of getting things done on schedule. When people do not move as fast as he wishes he often loses control of himself and raves and fumes quite like a spoiled child. The African would be able to insist that it is the white man who has no control of himself.

The taboos of savage life are many and complex. They are habitually well observed. And when it is remembered that the taboos are prohibitions on practices that are attractive and which

the agent wishes to engage in, it will be seen that it requires some mastery of the impulses to be able to resist.

As to imitativeness, it is not at all apparent that the savage is more imitative than others. We adopt the ways of the people in the group which we admire and which we are trying to attain to, but with the ways and methods of another group we do not concern ourselves. The savage will adopt a new garment of civilization when he has commenced to admire the group of civilized men with whom he has been associated, but there are many irreconcilables in every group of primitive people who flatly refuse to touch any of the accursed foreigner's things. It may be said that we imitate other people when we wear neckties or stiff collars or other by-products of fashion, but it would be perhaps a better statement to say that we respond to a demand for this sort of thing.

Now most of the examples of imitation in the savages of my acquaintance could appropriately be classed in this category. When they wear foreign clothes it is because they admire the group that wears them, and seek to secure some measure of identification and incorporation with that group. They secure guns, not from a desire to imitate, but from a desire to hunt and fight successfully. They build better huts, or even construct real houses, because they see a certain advantage in this procedure, and not on account of mere imitation. It is, at most, rational imitation.

The most positive statements of the psychology of the savage have been made with reference to his reasoning power. It seems a very natural and defensible conclusion that, since exact science as we know it does not exist among them, they have an inferior ability in reasoning. At least they lack a sufficiently developed reasoning faculty to meet the needs of their life.

It will, of course, be apparent that the modern experimental method which originated with Galileo and his generation did not originate independently among the present-day savages. But the power of forming hypotheses to account for difficulties is as readily observed among them as among us.

The quantitative conceptions have entered but slightly into their life. Cloth is measured by fathoms, the outstretched arms of the seller sufficing for a measure, but there is no measure of

weight. The volume of oil that is sold is measured by the potful, but there is no rigid standard of size.

There is no formal drill in numbers, as there is no formal drill in anything, but I tried a lad once with the idea of discovering whether he could tell nine times nine. "If nine pieces of cassava cost nine brass rods each, how much would they all cost?" After the inevitable argument that they did not cost nine rods each, but could be bought anywhere at five rods each, he finally yielded the point and agreed for argument's sake, and then set out to try to find the solution. He took nine sticks and placed them on the ground, breaking the last one into nine pieces. He then placed one of these pieces on each of the other sticks, and found that he had eight whole sticks and one piece left over, so he announced that the result was—*eighty-one*.

The importance that should be given to the social forces in the psychology of a race can be well illustrated by considering the emotional character of negro religion. Davenport<sup>1</sup> classes the wild extravagances which may still be observed in certain groups of whites as "primitive," and matches them with similar accounts of the activities of present-day negroes.

The facts are, of course, not in dispute. The American negro is emotional in religion—and the accounts that have been handed down in the literature are substantially accurate. In a typical negro revival meeting there is, as a rule, a minimum of thought in the sermon. The exhortation consists often of a chant with a violent appeal to the emotions of the hearers, and lurid imagery. If the appeal is successful some of the audience are affected by it. They begin to respond in rhythmic movements, or in crooning chants or loud shoutings. There is often an epidemic, and large numbers are affected simultaneously. Sometimes the whole congregation gets religion, and multitudes are slain before the Lord.

The assumption that is made to explain these facts is that such manifestations are native to the savage mind and are explicable as manifestations of the negro's lack of resistance to stimuli and to his general imitateness.

<sup>1</sup> F. M. Davenport, *Primitive Trails in Religious Revivals*.

It seems that the facts can be explained better without appealing to the native African endowment. The social situation in which the American negro found himself has, in all probability, furnished the pattern by means of which he was guided in his religious life. Extravagant as the reactions are, they can all be matched by others just as remarkable in the white race that was the teacher of the black. In Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in 1803, 20,000 white people were gathered together for the great revival services, where they stayed till the provisions in the district were exhausted, and were then compelled to disperse. There were the most exciting manifestations of religious conversion. Some had the "jerks" and could not control their muscles. Others would take hold of the young trees and twist the bark off in their excitement.

Until the last twenty-five years the customary way of carrying on religious activities in the rural South was to have more or less perfunctory services during the fall, winter, and spring, with many interruptions in the winter on account of the weather, but to concentrate attention on the summer revival or "camp-meeting." At most of these it was the custom to appoint "holding committees," not financial organizations, but more apathetic individuals who would undertake to hold the shouters and prevent damage during their exercises. As late as twenty years ago one could be pretty sure of seeing someone "shout" at the revivals of the white people, but it has practically died out at present.

The practice among the whites having disappeared so completely, it would be significant to inquire whether the negro churches are correspondingly affected. And this turns out to be the case. A friend of mine visiting the South took the first opportunity (and this was fifteen years ago) of visiting a negro church for the purpose of hearing some of the plaintive negro music that the "jubilee singers" had popularized. He came away disgusted with what he had heard, for the choir had given as the main rendition on the program a selection from an oratorio, "The Heavens Are Telling." The theory of my friend was that this last was a servile and unworthy imitation, and that they were quite original in their former emotional Christianity.

But even these facts are not, perhaps, conclusive, for it may be thought that the psychology of the American negro is gradually undergoing a change in his new environment due to physical changes of an anatomical nature, the result, in turn, of the different physical conditions under which the race is now situated. In this connection the form taken by the Christianity of present-day converts to missionary activity ought to be instructive.

Within a radius of ten miles in one district on the Upper Congo there have been three distinct types of Christianity observable. The original church at Equatorville was founded by men of a rather liberal turn, who allowed the largest liberty to the native converts in working out the problems of polygamy and slavery and the use of tobacco. This was succeeded by a very strictly legalistic type of teaching, in which the number of forbidden practices rivaled the native taboos, and were, in fact, regarded substantially as substituted taboos—very much as has been described by Mr. Stefansson in Alaska, where the people put away their nets on Sunday because it was the sabbath day, and proceeded to fish with hook and line.

The third type of religion in the Congo was very different from either of the others, being the result of the preaching and instruction of a company of Trappist monks whose emphasis was put on relics and ceremonial observances. The type of religion observable in the village resembles quite closely, at least in its superficial aspect, what one sees in rural Portugal or Belgium.

One significant thing in this connection is that the religion of the three churches above referred to was in no case emotional to any marked degree. I have yet to observe anything resembling excitement in the whole phenomenon of the conversion of a people to Christianity in Africa. The mission was and is a decided success. There are now more than five thousand converts, and the seriousness with which they take their religion is evidenced by the statement that this company is at present employing nearly three hundred adult evangelists, paying them a living support, and keeping them going all the time. But their reaction to Christianity has taken a form decidedly theological, and they can argue and debate like any one of our modern polemic sects.



A reasonable explanation would assume that the pattern from which their conceptions of the new religion were taken was the determining factor in the reaction. The American negro is emotional in religion on account of the type of religion which his teachers possessed when he adopted the faith. He is rapidly changing this, owing to the corresponding change that has taken place in the superior social group. The Congo African would become as emotional as the slaves were before the war if the Holy Rollers were to go among them and establish congregations.

The hypothesis that has been forming, therefore, in recent years concerning the mind of so-called primitive man, meaning the uncivilized races of the present day, is that in native endowment the savage child is, on the average, about the same in capacity as the child of civilized races. Instead of the concept of different stages or degrees of mentality, we find it easier to think of the human mind as being, in its capacity, about the same everywhere, the difference in culture to be explained in terms of the physical geography, or the stimuli from other groups, or the unaccountable occurrence of great men. But this is only a hypothesis. It has not been proved. It may well be that differences in anatomical structure can be correlated with differences in mental capacity. One would suppose that the size or weight of the brain could be so correlated. The difficulty is in finding a crucial test. To measure the achievements of the tribes in their own habitat is inconclusive, and to import youths into our schools is to fail to isolate the years of childhood which recent psychology considers the most potent in their influence on the after-life.

Much light could be thrown on the problem by going to the villages and making detailed mental and physical tests. The expedition to Torres Straits by the Cambridge University Expedition, and later to the Todas in India, was a good beginning. A little was done with the natives who were at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904. The evidence was in the direction of the conclusion suggested by this paper, but the tests were admittedly inconclusive.

In the first place, the natives at the World's Fair were too few in number and selected on the wrong principle to be representative. Secondly, the tests were merely for sense-organ acuity, vision, color-

blindness, and auditory ability. Since 1904 a great deal of progress has been made in establishing the norm of mental ability in many other directions. A third reason for the inconclusive character of the tests lies in the fact that the investigators in the cases mentioned were in all cases ignorant of the language and had to rely on interpreters or the use of "pidgin English."

If an expedition could be made to the equatorial Congo in charge of one who could speak the language readily and who was also trained in psychological technique, and if records could be obtained of the mental and physical ability of, say, one thousand or fifteen hundred properly distributed individuals, it would be possible to be far more positive on the general question than we are at the present time. Some thought of organizing such an expedition has recently been indulged in, and the plans were outlined in detail in the early part of 1914, but the outbreak of the war postponed everything. When peace comes, it may be that funds can be secured and the expedition conducted, and if so it will be possible to write with much more certainty concerning the mind of primitive man.